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Age-Sex Roles and Personality in Middle Age:
A Thematic Apperception Study

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THE ORIGINAL purpose of this investigation was to explore the use of projective techniques in the study of social roles, and, more specifically, to use the Thematic Apperception technique in studying adult age-sex roles in the family.

There has been little empirical research on marital or parental roles in middle age, just as there has been relatively little research in the wider area of psychological and social changes that occur in men and women in the middle years of life. The investigators hoped to find fruitful ways of describing age-sex roles in the family and thereby to contribute to the social psychology of middle age.¹

¹ The data being reported here were gathered in connection with a larger study known as the Kansas City Study of Adult Life. The larger study, supported by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation, includes data on over 700 adults aged 40 to 70 residing in the metropolitan area of Kansas City. It has been carried out under the auspices of the Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago, and under the direction of a research committee of which Robert J. Havighurst has been chairman.

The present study was supported in part, by funds provided by the Social Science Research Committee of the University of Chicago. The investigators are indebted to Robert Yufit for his assistance in pretesting the picture upon which this study is based; to Warren A. Peterson, who directed the field work involved in gathering these data; to Meyer Braiterman and Gunther Rice for checking the consistency of responses obtained from this picture with those obtained from standard TAT pictures; and to

The concept of social role involves not only the behavior exhibited by persons who occupy a common 'office' or status, but also the expectations held by other people about what that behavior should be. Expectations of role behavior are, in turn, both explicit and implicit. The investigator who is interested in what husbands expect of wives may choose to ask husbands explicitly by using interviews or questionnaires. He may, on the other hand, choose to deal with implicit expectations by exploring husbands' fantasies about wives.

At least two considerations prompted the choice of the Thematic Apperception technique. The first was that the respondent would be providing data about family roles without an explicit awareness that he was doing so. As a result, the responses should be relatively uncensored, more closely related to the respondent's personal values and experiences than those he might feel constrained to give in answer to more direct questions. Second, fantasy material, while presenting certain difficulties of analysis as compared with questionnaire data, should have a decided advantage for exploratory research. The richness and unstructured nature of projective data enable the investigator to follow an inductive process; he can follow up clues

Lisa Cohen for her assistance in establishing the reliability of our judgments.

as they appear in his data rather than check dimensions and hypotheses defined in advance.

The Thematic Apperception Test and adaptations thereof emerged from the field of clinical psychology and have been used mainly in the study of individual personality. They have also been used, however, to study groups of people, as, for instance, in studies of personality patterns common to persons of different ages or different cultures (1, 2).

While the study being reported here is of the latter type, it constitutes a departure in method insofar as attention was focussed, not upon the persons who supplied the data, but upon the persons about whom data were given. The primary concern was with the collective role-images of husbands, wives, sons, and daughters, as those images emerged from the projections of different respondents. (From this point of view, the present study used the method of the cultural anthropologist, whereby respondents act as informants, not primarily about themselves, but about one or another datum of social interaction. In this case, the data of social interaction dealt with the social roles of adults in the family.)

After the role-images had been delineated, the investigators turned to possible implications in the data as regards the personalities of the respondents themselves. Thus this investigation broadened in scope as the research progressed and, as will become clearer in following sections, this report deals not only with familial roles but also with the relations between role-image and personality in middle age.

THE SAMPLE

The respondents used in the present study were taken from a larger sample of 240 men and women aged 40 to 70 residing in the metropolitan area of Kansas City. The larger group

constituted a random sample of individuals (not married couples) drawn by area-probability techniques, but stratified by age, sex, and socioeconomic level. The sample had been designed to include successively fewer persons in each five-year age interval from 40-44 to 65-70.

To study possible differences between social class groups, those cases were selected from the original 240 who were most representative, on the one hand, of upper-middle-class patterns of life, and on the other hand, of working-class patterns. All those who fell at the lowest social levels (lower-lower class) were omitted; and all those who, on indices of occupation, education, income, house type, and area of residence, were marginal between upper-middle- and working-classes. Omitted, also, were all non-whites.

These selective procedures yielded 131 cases, distributed as shown in Table 1.

Men

The 32 men of middle-class status are well-to-do business and professional men. There are a few high-salaried accountants and salesmen, executives of large businesses, engineers, lawyers, one judge, and one minister. None are retired, and all but seven consider their present positions to be the top positions they have ever held. With only one exception, all have had at least a high school education, and the large majority have gone to college for two or more years. A few hold higher academic or professional degrees. The origins of these men are varied in terms of social class: some began life in middle-class families, others in lower-class families.

The working-class men, as a group, represent the stable "blue-collar" worker. The majority are industrial workers of varying job rating—assembly-line inspector, oiler, truck driver, machinist, railroad switchman. A few foremen are included, but these are men who have worked their way up through the lower job echelons. Of the 36 in this group, only 3 are retired; and only 9 report that they held better jobs in the past than in the present. The majority of these men finished grade school, a few did not. Some have high school and/or trade school education. (Four attended college, but for less than one year.) All the men in this group are of lower-class origins (thus contrasting with the middle-class men, many of whom have been upwardly mobile).

There are no group differences between middle-class and working-class men as regards marital status, parenthood, ethnic background, or religious affiliation. All 68 have married, and with the exceptions of one who has been widowed and one who has been divorced, all are presently living with their wives. (For 7, this is a second marriage; for one, a third marriage.) All but 8 are fathers, (with families that range

TABLE 1
THE SAMPLE

Social Status	Age 40-54		Age 55-70	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Middle-class	18	22	14	13
Working-class	21	12	15	16
Total: 131				

in size from one to five children in the middle-class and from one to ten in the working-class) and 25 are grandfathers.

With but one exception, all the men in both social class groups are native-born and are of North European ethnic backgrounds. The great majority grew up in Kansas, Missouri, or neighboring states of the midwest.

Both social class groups show the same range of religious affiliations: the large majority belong to one or another Protestant denomination; six in all are Catholic; one is Jewish; and eight report no church affiliation.

Women

Of the 35 middle-class women, the large majority are married housewives, living with their husbands. (Four have never married; three are widowed, three are divorced.) Their husbands are mostly professional or business men. Of the women living with their husbands, seven hold jobs outside the home, and in three of these cases, the job is one of assisting the husband in his business or professional pursuits. Of the 31 women who have married, six have remained childless; the others have from one to six children. Twelve are presently grandmothers. The women tend to have somewhat less education than men of comparable status, yet there are only nine women in this group who have not gone beyond high school; all the others have had one or more years of college. As with the middle-class men, some of these women were born into lower-class families, others into middle-class.

Of the 28 working-class women, all have married (one is presently divorced, six are widowed, five are married for the second time). All of them married men who are now employed as industrial workers or as blue-collar workers of similar occupational status. The great majority of these women are housewives; only four hold jobs outside the home. All but one have children. Twenty of the 28 are grandmothers.² All are of lower-class origin.

² For both men and women, grandparenthood occurred more frequently before age 55 in working-class than in middle-class.

The two social class groups are similar to each other and to the men in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliation. All 63 women are native-born; all are of North European extraction; all but a few have spent most of their lives in the midwest. The range of religious affiliations is the same as that for men.

THE DATA AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The standard TAT has no single picture appropriate to the purpose of studying age-sex roles in the intergenerational family setting. While it is possible to explore these roles through the standard TAT, the investigators sought a more economical research tool. A specially-drawn picture was therefore used, one designed specifically to evoke the sentiments and preoccupations of middle-aged respondents in relation to family roles.

The Research Instrument

The picture shows four figures, all drawn with a minimum of detail. Observe that at the left is a Young Man seated; then moving clockwise, a Young Woman, standing; an Older Man, standing; an Older Woman, seated. The Young Man is drawn in profile, with the upper torso and right arm shown. He sits opposite the Older Man and his gaze, while vague, is in the direction of the Older Man. The Young Woman, standing near the Older Man, is looking down toward the Older Woman. The Older Man, standing at the right of the picture, is the most prominent in terms of the space occupied in the drawing. His head is slightly inclined, and he holds a pipe. The Older Woman is seated with her back to the viewer. Only the profile of her cheek and jaw can be seen; and while her figure occupies the bottom center of the drawing, it occupies less space than any other figure. While the interaction is ambiguous, the four figures form a group (all four face inward) and together they fill almost the total space of the drawing.

Pretests

Before using the picture in the present research, it was pretested in two different ways. First, a check was made against the possibility that, through some artifact in the way it was drawn, the picture might yield only stereotyped responses. It was tried with men and women of various ages in various informal settings. The responses proved to be greatly varied in tone and content. It was thus concluded that the



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ADULT FAMILY SCENE

picture was successful as a projective technique insofar as it elicited wide individual differences in response.

Second, a check was made against the possibility that the picture presents the respondent with too limited a stimulus to yield data appropriate to the problem. Is the response to this one picture representative of the respondent's covert attitudes regarding age-sex roles—or is the response an artifact of the particular picture and the particular method of administration? More specifically, would the respondent's perception of the Older Woman, for instance, correspond with his perceptions of older women as obtained from standard TAT pictures?

This picture was administered along with cards 2, 6BM, and 7BM from the standard TAT, to 36 middle-aged men and women. Analysis was made, on the one hand, of the respondent's descriptions of a young man, a young woman, an older man, and an older woman, as these descriptions emerged from responses to cards 2, 6BM, and 7BM; and, on the other hand, of the descriptions that emerged from responses to the specially-drawn picture. The two sets of descriptions for each respondent were then compared. Using different methods of judging consistency and of quantifying judgments, two independent analysts made these comparisons and both concluded that there was a generally high degree of consistency. It was concluded, therefore, that this picture was providing data that were consistent, but not synonymous, with data obtainable from the standard TAT; but that, for the purpose of studying adult age-sex roles, the special picture had marked advantages over the standard TAT.

Administration of the Picture

The picture was presented to the respondent at the end of a long interview that covered various aspects of his life history, his views of the life-periods that constitute adulthood, and his attitudes toward aging. The interviews were conducted for the most part in the respondent's own home; occasionally, in his place of business.

Three levels of inquiry were employed in using the picture. The person was asked, first, to tell a story about the picture: a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Then the interviewer, moving clockwise around the picture and beginning with the figure of the Young Man, asked the respondent to assign an age and to give a general description of each of the four figures. Again moving clockwise, the respondent was asked finally to describe what he thought each figure in the picture was feeling about the others.

Stimulus Value of the Picture

Almost without exception, all respondents saw the picture as representing a two-generation family. One of the younger figures, most often the YM, was frequently seen as being outside the primary group, usually in the role of suitor or fiancé, or son-in-law or daughter-in-law.

While always structured as a family situation, the stories varied widely in content and in tone. It might be a story of a young man coming to ask for the daughter's hand in marriage and being opposed by the older woman; it might be a mother, father, daughter, son-in-law having a casual conversation before dinner; it might be a young couple asking for financial help from parents; or it might be an older couple coming to visit the younger.

Generally speaking, the two generations were seen as being some 30 to 35 years apart in age. The YM was almost always described as being somewhere in his twenties (the median age ascribed was 25); the YW was always seen as being a few years younger (the median age ascribed was 21). The two older figures were seen most often as being in their late 50's or 60's, with the OW "about the same age" as the OM (the median age ascribed to both the OM and OW was actually 60).³

It is within this over-all setting of the two-generation family, then, that the

³ Contrary to expectation, median ages ascribed to each of the four figures were consistent from one group of respondents to the next. Thus the oldest respondents saw the YM as a 20-year-old as frequently as did the younger respondents. Or, to take another example, the OW was said to be 60 as frequently by women respondents who were themselves 45 as by women respondents who were themselves 65.

role-images of the YM, YW, OM and OW emerged.

General Approach to Role Analysis

Having used the three levels of inquiry, various kinds of data were available for each figure in the picture. The figure was seen first in action categories, as his actions related him to the immediate issue before the family. He was seen, second, in more general or non-situational terms, as he related to a more abstract social or moral environment. He was seen, third, as he related in terms of affect to other significant figures in the family constellation.

The data for each figure can be regarded as a set of related expectations—for our purposes, a set of expectations as to how each category of person (YM, YW, OM, OW) relates to the social environment and to other categories of persons in the family in terms of action and affect, manipulation and feeling. It is this set of expectations which were regarded operationally as the role description. The following assumption was made: granted that the different attributes ascribed by the respondent to the four figures in the picture have their roots in intrapsychic determinants, still the respondent's expectations, based on his experiences with real people, will have a highly determining effect on which aspects of the self he chooses to ascribe to each figure in the picture. In other words, the investigators took the respondent's perceptions as projections, mindful of the fact that what was given was intrapsychically determined, but trusting that the interactional social reality had called out and directed the projection; and that the two (intrapsychic factors and social reality) were syntonetic in the phenomenal field of the respondent.

If this assumption is correct, then respondents did not distribute aspects of the self randomly among the four figures, without regard for the social stimulus value of each figure. It follows that, to the extent there is similarity in the role behaviors of real-life people, there should be a corresponding similarity in the role expectations for such categories of people as they are perceived in the picture.

Illustration of the Method

The first step in the analysis was to see what was the preoccupation around which the respondent had built his story. This preoccupation, as he builds it into his narrative, pervades and colors all aspects of the story; and the role descriptions took on greater meaning once the basic theme, or preoccupation, was understood.

For example, a woman tells the following story:

"I think the boy is going away to the service. He's telling the mother and father. That's his wife with him. The father is pretty downhearted about it. He has a downcast look on his face. His wife doesn't feel too good about it, but she's trying to pacify the older couple. They've just been married. I can't tell how it'll end up. If he has to go overseas to fight, there's always the possibility he won't come back."

General description of the YM: "Sort of a boy who has always been close to his parents. Looks like a nice kind of boy."

General description of the YW: "Looks very sympathetic. She's a real nice girl. She's trying to sympathize with the old people."

General description of the OM: "Looks like a nice home-body. Nice fellow."

General description of the OW: "I can't see enough of her face. I couldn't say any more, because there's no face to go by. Sort of refined, from her stature."

YM's feelings: "He thinks they're all right or he wouldn't have sat down. . . . Well, some boys wouldn't care how their folks felt, but he seems to realize that they're hurt."

YW's feelings: "She thinks her husband is a pretty fine fellow, or she wouldn't be trying to sympathize with his folks."

OM's feelings: "He's pleased with the young

folks. He's interested in what his son's going to do."

OW's feelings: "She's in a bad place—can't see enough of her. I really couldn't say."

The theme which underlies this story is the theme of family dispersion, the "empty nest." The respondent tells us, in effect, that the children are leaving home and that they "won't come back."⁴

Looking first at the description of the Young Man, in the story proper we are told what his action is: to leave home, presumably for some dangerous and rigorous extrafamilial environment. His action has emotional consequences for the parents, consequences which he does not seek to mitigate. His face is set beyond the boundaries of the primary group, and his only action within the group is the rather formal one of making this position clear to his parents. "He's telling the mother and father." It is left for his wife to deal with the emotional consequences of the YM's course.

We are next told about the Young Man that: "He has always been close to his parents." The implication is that an earlier relationship of the son to the parents is now ending. It is of interest that the respondent speaks of the YM's affiliation to the parents only when she discusses him in the general, nonsituational context. When she is asked to consider him in relation to the immediate situation and to the actors in it, the theme of remoteness infuses the portrayal. This point is made clear when

⁴ The respondent seems to defend herself against the impact of this crisis by proposing that the son does not leave of his own volition. An impersonal force for which he has no responsibility, the Army, has snatched him away. She probably reveals her true preoccupation, however, when she tells us that the older people feel "hurt," that the younger woman feels some guilt towards the older couple and tries to "pacify" them, and that the young couple have just been married.

the respondent is again asked to put the young man back into the interactive context and to discuss his feelings there. Now he emerges as one who, although essentially detached, still adheres to minimal social forms. The respondent has difficulty in ascribing any but the most qualified feeling to him: "thinks they're all right," and "seems to realize that they're hurt." The YM's reaction to the parents' feelings is a relatively intellectualized one: he "realizes" or recognizes their existence, while it is his wife who "sympathizes" with them. Even this modest affective gesture on the part of the YM is doubted, for the respondent goes out of her way to assure us that the YM is not like other boys who "wouldn't care how their parents felt." In the respondent's whole recital, then, she attributes to the YM only minimal and grudging affiliation to the parents.

We can now make this general statement about the perception of the Young Man's familial role: his basic orientation is to rigorous and compelling nonaffective extrafamilial concerns, and intimacy for him is to be found with peers of the opposite sex. Although not too long ago (in terms of subjective time) the primary, parental group was a major focus of his interest, his present role there is governed by moral directives ("superego" demands) rather than by spontaneous warmth. These directives, coming into conflict with his more compelling extrafamilial interests, result in a posture of grudging punctiliousness, of bare attention to formal, socially defined demands (a "this much and no more" attitude). Himself barely participant in the family—although at the same time, a source of concern to the parents—he leaves to his wife the mediation of the emotional issues between himself and his parents. He is generally governed by outside de-

mands, as though those demands were more congenial to his energies and motivations than are the demands made by the parental group.

Turning to the Young Woman, we are given a quite different image, one which scarcely changes from level to level of the protocol. In the story proper she appears as one whose actions are directed toward the parents (as are the Young Man's). The difference between the Young Man and her lies in the fact that while his action toward the parents—telling them that he is leaving—begins and ends his contact with them, her action—"trying to pacify them"—implies a continuing and multifaceted relationship with the older group. The Young Man only tells them about himself, and at the most can only "recognize" the effects of his announcement on the parents. The Young Woman, while she "doesn't feel too good about it," does not deal with her own reaction but attempts rather to alleviate the parents' grief. The word "pacify" implies maternal behavior, as does the pattern of dealing with the woes of others rather than with her own.

Our interpretation of the Young Woman's strong, maternal concern with intimate human relations is strengthened when we look at the general description given of her. Here, where the respondent's implicit task is to describe the figure in less immediate and less situational terms, the respondent persists in seeing the YW in relation to the current crisis. Again she is seen as a person whose actions are nurturant and consoling, but at this point an element of emotional distance enters into the description. The Young Woman is "trying" to sympathize with the older group. Here is an implication of some barrier against emotional

rapprochement between the old group and the YW, a barrier which she feels impelled to overcome. The description of the YW's feelings give us a clue as to why she attempts to overcome the barrier. It is because of her regard for her husband that she feels a responsibility to his parents. We are told that her primary affiliation is to her husband, and that responsibility to the parents is secondary, stemming from her marital tie. She takes form now as a person who must deal nurturantly with various aspects of the interpersonal universe, although institutional and generational barriers may exist between her and certain others. If formal ties exist between her and other people, she then seeks to enrich the formal ties with empathic bonds.

Taking the role description as a whole, and seeing it against the theme of "empty nest," we see the Young Woman's role as one of emotional liaison, operating in the widening breach between the parental and filial generations. Her husband moves off into what are viewed as distant and threatening events, while she, though drawn after him, bridges the gap and maintains some version of the lost emotional ties between parents and children. Against the background of traumatic family dispersion, her role has a maternal quality: although her primary tie is to her husband, her immediate concern is for those who have been injured by the course of events, and she attempts in maternal fashion to compensate the injured through her nurturance. In sum, her role is complementary to her husband's in that, while he moves off to "do battle," she carries behind to handle the human consequences of his actions and decisions.

Turning to the figure of the Older Man, we see him first as feeling sad at

the news of his son's leaving. No actions are ascribed to him. He reacts to traumatic situations with feeling, but he is not seen as acting out his feelings or doing anything to alter the situation which made him sad.

At the level of general description, we are told that he is "a nice home-body," positively regarded. His major cathexis or emotional investment is to the family, and it is there that he is gratified. Values relevant to his role are those of comfort and ease in an affiliative setting. (We give "comfort" and "ease" priority over the implication of affiliation, since the description was given in terms of "home" rather than in terms of "family.")

Moving to the feelings ascribed to the Older Man, we notice a shift away from the initial description given of him. Where he was initially saddened, he is now "pleased" with the young people, and he will maintain a meaningful, although somewhat intellectualized interest in his son's future activity. There is still no intimation that he will act to change the course of his son's affairs—the son will "do," and the father will be interested—but a note of equanimity, based on denial, has entered the description. If we examine this shift in the Older Man's feelings in light of the theme of family dissolution, we conclude that this shift represents a concept of defensive adjustment, adjustment to the inevitable and inescapable reality of the Young Man's maturity through defensive denial of strong personal feeling. After some initial depression, the Older Man resigns himself to the fact of the breach and returns to the emotional status quo. While the young group, especially the YM, are no longer reciprocally affiliative, the Older Man's outward feelings toward them remain basically unchanged.

The Older Man's role, then, somewhat like the Young Woman's, is an adjustive one. He buffers the shocks of transition. Accepting the reality of change, he acts to minimize the consequent feelings and to find new bases for intimacy in the new situation. It is of particular interest that the Older Man attempts to maintain the status quo by changing himself and hiding his own feelings. At no point in the protocol does he act to change anything outside himself.

This interpretation of the Older Man's role gains support when we turn to the Older Woman. In the story proper we are told nothing about her; her presence is merely noted. At the general level of description, perception of her is again denied. In effect we are told that she has no emotionally expressive surface ("there's no face to go by"). She is associated only with "refinement," a description which implies that she has no contact with a freely affective, spontaneous environment. (By contrast, the Older Man is the "homebody.") The word "refined" suggests the values of restraint, pride, and possibly a defensive rigidity.

As to the Older Woman's feelings, the respondent in effect tells us that she cannot imagine any feeling states which might pertain, because the OW is "in a bad place." While there is a relative paucity of data about the OW, we nevertheless obtain the strong impression of rigidity and withdrawal in the figure. Viewed against the thematic background, this rigidity and withdrawal takes on meaning as a possible mode of coping with crisis, but a mode which is quite different from the one defined for the Older Man. Faced with the trauma of family breakdown, the Older Man's role is to adjust to the inevitable by minimiz-

ing his own reactions. The adjustive mode ascribed to the Older Woman seems to stress denial of the trauma and its emotional consequences, strict control, and magical defenses against her vulnerability. The Older Man's adjustment, although a defensive one, still is oriented toward a social universe and untroubled contact with others in future situations. The Older Woman's role has a more primitive, egocentric quality, as if the vulnerability of the self were the only concern, and this concern justifies the use of archaic defenses—such as complete denial of a painful situation.

Granted that both the Older Man's and Older Woman's roles may represent possible solutions of the respondent's own problem—her defenses against the problem she has proposed—the investigators' primary interest is with the content of the roles as they emerge from the respondent's fantasy, and to which figure in the picture each role is ascribed. The respondent has presented one role as being appropriate to the father; the other, as appropriate to the mother. It is such concepts of "role-appropriateness" that constitute the data of the present research.

TREATMENT OF THE DATA

Using the method illustrated above, each protocol was analyzed for role descriptions of each of the four stimulus figures. Interpretations were recorded separately for each figure. The protocols were divided according to the sex of the respondent, but were analyzed without knowledge of the respondent's age or social class.

Reliability of Interpretations

The question of reliability of interpretations was dealt with at an early stage

in the research. Using nine protocols selected at random, each of the four figures was rated on a five-point scale for each of twelve personality characteristics: on the extent to which the figure was seen as having strong affect, as being nurturant, succorant, affiliative, deferent, hostile, narcissistic, extra- or intrafamilially oriented, impulsive, autonomous, reality-oriented, and "superego"-oriented (acting on the basis of moral imperatives). Thus, for each protocol, forty-eight separate ratings were made. To keep the ratings as independent as possible, all the OM figures were rated first; then all the OW figures; and so on.

Two judges rated each of the four figures on the nine protocols, and the ratings were then correlated. (One judge was one of the present authors, the second, a graduate student in psychology who had had no previous acquaintance with these data.) The resulting coefficients of correlation were: .81 for the YM figure, .88 for the YW, .83 for the OM, and .88 for the OW.

This procedure proved to be a somewhat oblique test of reliability, since it was later decided not to deal with the role descriptions on the basis of such ratings, but rather to continue to draw summary descriptions of the figure and then to categorize the descriptions according to similarity. At the same time, this test of reliability was a relatively stringent one for this type of data.

In the light of the high correlations, it was concluded that the investigators' interpretations were not idiosyncratic, and that an independent judge would see in the data essentially the same patterns that we saw.

Quantifying the Data

Once all the protocols had been an-

alyzed, then decoded, the data for each figure were treated separately. The procedures with reference to the data on the Older Man will be described here since these were the first to be dealt with, and since findings regarding the OM influenced in some ways the organization of the other sets of data.

All the descriptions were grouped on the basis of similarity into mutually exclusive categories, attempting always to judge similarity in terms of the most salient features ascribed to the OM by the respondent. This was a lengthy process since the attempt was to establish categories that would produce the least distortion of the original data. At the same time, having become aware that there were age differences in the perceptions of the OM, the investigators attempted to structure the categories in such fashion as to highlight the age differences.

Six major categories were finally delineated and arranged along a continuum termed "dominance-submission." At one end were those categories in which, whatever other characteristics were ascribed the OM, he has always been seen as a dominant figure in the family. At the other end were those categories in which he was seen as a passive or submissive figure. Dominance or submission was judged in terms of the OM's impact on the situation; the extent to which others deferred to him; the extent to which resolutions of family issues depended upon his wishes, his judgments, or his decisions.

Dealing next with one after another subsample of respondents (middle-class men, middle-class women, working-class men, working-class women), frequency distributions were made in which the role descriptions were plotted by cate-

gory and by age of respondent. The distributions were then tested for statistical significance by applying the chi-square method.

For each subsample of respondents there was a shift with age in the perceptions of the OM. The role descriptions given by younger respondents (aged 40 to 54) fell more often in those categories in which the OM is described as dominant; the descriptions given by older respondents (aged 55 to 70) fell most often in those categories in which the OM is passive. The number of cases in each subsample was too small to establish reliable chi-square values, but the trend was present in every group. Cases were then combined into larger groupings—all male respondents, all female, all middle-class, all working-class. The age trends were now even more pronounced (P values were between .05 and .01). Finally, when all respondents were grouped together, the age-shift was unquestionably reliable (P was .001).

At this point, while age of respondent consistently produced variation in the data, it was not clear which of the original variables—age, sex, or social status—was the most important in producing the overall variation. A further step was therefore taken. Ratings on dominance-submission were assigned to each category of role description; these ratings were then submitted to an analysis of variance. It was found that of all the variables—age, sex, social status, and the interactions thereof—only age was significant (P was beyond .001).⁵

⁵ The data on the Older Woman were also subjected to analysis of variance, with the same result emerging. Data on the YM and YW could not be treated in the same fashion, however, since the categories in these two sets of data could not justifiably be rated along a single continuum.

Presentation of Findings

In the sections to follow, the data for each of the four figures are reported in turn. For each figure there is first a general description of the role-image as it emerged from the total array of protocols; then a discussion of age, sex, and social-class differences among respondents in their perceptions of the figure. Finally there is a discussion of the implications of these differences in regard to the personalities of respondents.

In moving from the role-images to the implications for personality, the investigators are aware that they move to a different area of interpretation. An example may aid in clarifying this point: the Young Man's role is perceived differently by 40-year-olds than by 60-year-olds. This variation may, on the one hand, reflect different social realities for 40- and 60-year-olds (i.e., a Young Man may in reality behave differently in interaction with a 40-year-old than in interaction with a 60-year-old). On the other hand, this variation is likely also to reflect differences in personalities of the respondents who tell the stories. (The raw data, it will be recalled, are fantasy data and, as stated earlier, it must be assumed that the individual's personality partly determines the role images.) Having described the age differences in the images of the YM, the investigators turned to the second area of interpretation and asked what these differences imply regarding the personalities of 40-year-olds and the personalities of 60-year-olds.

The statements dealing with personality are offered as speculative rather than conclusive. At the same time, the investigators believe that exploring the data in this second fashion has produced hypotheses regarding adult personality

that merit further research and verification.

THE YOUNG MAN

Of the four figures in the picture, the Young Man was ascribed the least significant familial role. While all respondents saw the picture as a family setting, and while the other three figures could be comfortably described within this setting, this was not the case with the YM. Almost half our respondents saw him as being oriented primarily toward the extrafamilial world and only secondarily toward the family.

Within the family the YM is a rather remote, detached figure; his membership in the group depends more upon formal than upon affective ties. In both the family and the outside world, social forms and institutions, rather than qualities intrinsic to himself, define the YM's role and guide his actions. The impression is that the YM exists in a set of institutional matrices, and it is the workings of such matrices that determine what happens to him. For instance, the YM is often seen within the family in the role of suitor of the YW. He makes his request and establishes the problem; but it is then a problem that is out of his hands and depends for its resolution upon the interaction between the OM and OW.

The YM's only source of strength is that he represents the more or less legitimate demands of the extrafamilial social environment, and accordingly his claims must be treated with some respect and consideration.⁶ His demands are po-

⁶ In 92 stories told about the picture, the YM was seen as posing a threat to the primary group—he is asking for the daughter in marriage, or he is about to leave home, or he and his wife are thinking of moving to another city. In most of these stories, the YM's demands are being opposed by the Older Woman (who is de-

tentially disruptive to the unity of the primary group, but they symbolize ambition, independence, and maturity, and cannot easily be denied.

A frequent component of the YM's role is controlled aggression. If he is seen as potentially self-assertive or intrusive within the family, it is implied that, by exercising self-control, he must protect the parents from the possibly destructive consequences of his impulses. Or, if he does act assertively, he must nullify his action by propitiating the older people. Aggression in the YM can be freely expressed only when it is directed outside the family and when it takes the form of ambition or achievement drive. The YM's aggression is never antisocial.

It is not only aggression that is neutralized within the family; there are also few spontaneous affiliative feelings ascribed to the YM. His emotional expressivity within the family is generally restricted for all categories of affect. This interpretation is supported by the fact that only 29% of respondents (in Categories 3 and 5 of Table 2) describe an openly affective familial role for the YM, while 71% see him primarily in terms of achievement strivings, social conformity, and impulse control (Categories 1, 2, and 4 of Table 2).

A salient feature of the YM's role, then, is that he responds most to promptings from the outer world, and least to inner prompting or impulsivity. The implication is that for the YM it is too dangerous to act directly from impulse; he must find guidance in the safe structure of environmental rules and directives.

scribed in these records as giving priority to the values of intimacy and family solidarity) and is being abetted, at least tacitly, by the Older Man (who is seen as being more in touch with outer-world demands than is the OW).

Categories of Role Descriptions

In examining the role descriptions of the YM, it appeared that there was no single continuum nor single variable by which the data could be ordered. There were at least two major dimensions of the role that seemed to preoccupy respondents and that varied independently. One related to the YM's "psychological location," whether he was seen as being oriented primarily toward the outside world or toward the family. The second related to the vitality ascribed to the YM, the extent to which he was perceived as acting on the basis of impulsivity, drive, inner motivation.

Five broad categories provided the best fit for the data. They are described here in the order in which they appear in Table 2, where they have been arranged to highlight the age differences between respondents.

1. *Outer world achievement.* Here are grouped all those role descriptions which ascribe to the YM qualities of aggressiveness or assertion directed toward the extrafamilial world, the commercial-technical environment. (In this category, a typical description of the YM is "ambitious.") The YM is primarily oriented toward the outer world and it is there that he is seen as expressive and achieving.

Within the family, the YM is affectively remote, bland, or deferent, and he does not emerge vividly in any categories of affect or action. If self-assertive needs within the family are recognized at all, they are seen as qualified or attenuated. If affiliative needs are recognized, there is a lack of strength or spontaneity about them. The YM reacts to the family (especially to the parents) in moral and rational terms, rather than in affective terms. He "respects them" and "values their advice;" he rarely loves them. Any interpersonal bond is, by implication, formalized.

2. *Family: controlled.* Here the YM is primarily oriented toward the family and has strong needs for assertion within the intimate family group; needs which must be controlled and limited. The control resides either in parental authority, or in the YM's own internalized controls. Thus the YM is seen as checking his aggressive energies and thereby protecting the

TABLE 2
ROLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE YOUNG MAN

Category:		Age 40-54		Age 55-70	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Outer-world achievement	Middle-class	8	7	1	0
	Working-class	7	1	2	0
	Total	23*		3	
2. Family: Controlled	Middle-class	3	8	0	6
	Working-class	7	4	3	3
	Total	22		12	
3. Family: Affiliative	Middle-class	1	2	5	2
	Working-class	2	2	1	1
	Total	7		9	
4. Outer-world conforming	Middle-class	1	3	2	3
	Working-class	2	4	5	9
	Total	10		19	
5. Family: Assertive	Middle-class	2	2	3	2
	Working-class	3	1	4	3
	Total	8		12	

* The chi-square test was applied to these category totals. The probability that the distribution occurred by chance is less than .001.

older group from its consequences. If he acts assertively, he must undo his action by reverting to a supradeferent or abasive stance.

3. *Family: affiliative.* The YM is seen here primarily in terms of a potent and spontaneous cathexis to the older group, with strong needs for intrafamilial affiliation. The affiliative needs are usually tempered with succorance needs. (The relative infrequency with which this category occurs is in contrast to the data on the YW.)

4. *Outer-world conforming.* This category is similar to No. 1 in that the YM is primarily oriented toward the extrafamilial world, but here he is seen, not in terms of an energetic, intrinsic drive toward achievement, but rather in terms of qualities *relevant* to achievement and success. He is "intelligent," "clean-cut," "well-groomed," rather than "ambitious" or "aggressive." He is trained for reliable performance, rather than driven to achievement.

Within the family, as in category No. 1, he is affectively bland, restrained, remote, and relates to family members in rational and moral terms rather than with spontaneous affect.

5. *Family: assertive.* Central here is the perception of the YM as an assertive peer in the family. He defines his own needs, goals, pur-

poses, and without propitiation, he works to further them within the family. He is expressive, and chooses freely the objects of affection and dislike among the older group.

Age Differences

As will be seen from Table 2, Categories 1 and 2 occur predominantly among younger respondents (aged 40 to 54); Categories 4 and 5 occur predominantly among older respondents (aged 55 to 70). The 40-year-old tends to see the YM as energetic and self-propelling. His aggressive, intrusive energies are funnelled towards the extrafamilial environment, where he is granted the right of self-expression and achievement; but these energies are successfully checked and controlled within the family setting.

For the 60-year-old respondent, the outer world is still the important area for the YM (Category 4), but it is no

longer an area which passively awaits the thrust of the YM's dynamic energies. Instead, the outer world is one into which the YM fits neatly by virtue of possessing those qualities which match the demands of a complex environment. The older respondent is still concerned with the YM's aggressive energies within the family (Categories 2 and 5), but now there is less faith that these energies can be controlled or profitably channelled into extrafamilial achievement.

The general age shift, then, is from seeing the YM as energetic in the outer world to seeing him as intrusive within the family; and from seeing him as aggressive and achieving in the outer world to seeing him as passive and conforming in the outer world.

If it is true that the stimulus figure of the YM symbolizes relatedness to the outer world, then the changing ways in which the YM is seen to relate to the outer world imply personality differences in respondents at the two age levels. For younger respondents, the individual possesses energy congruent to the opportunities within the outer world. A certain predatory quality is present in the individual, and the environment is seen as rewarding boldness and risk taking. There is a simple equivalence: one gets from the world what one puts into it.

Older respondents seem more cautious. In viewing the YM as prepared for, rather than motivated towards, achievement, there is the implication that the outer world is large and complex. One does not reform the world in line with one's wishes; one rather conforms to it. There may be some fear of the outer world among older people—a feeling that the environment is dangerous and that it is best approached with respectful and cautious gestures. Furthermore, to the

extent that the YM is himself a symbol of the entering wedge of the outer world within the family, the aggression that older respondents assign to him perhaps represents their fear of a hostile and encroaching outer world—a "young man's world."

Sex differences

The differences between men's and women's views of the YM stem from their concerns with control versus impulsivity. Categories 1, 3, and 5 in Table 2 represent relatively free affective expressivity for the YM, either in the family or in the outer world, while Categories 2 and 4 represent measures of conformity and restraint. Men's perceptions of the YM are clustered in the expressive categories, women's in the control categories. (The difference between the sexes in this regard is stable beyond the .005 level.)

Within the family setting (Categories 2 and 5), men give more stress to the YM's unhampered interpersonal assertiveness (Category 5), while women place greater stress on the note of control (Category 2).

Similarly, of Categories 1 and 4, men use Category 1 where the YM is achieving and self-motivated in the outer world; women use Category 4 where the YM is only functionally oriented to the outer world. Thus men see the YM in terms of intrusive, aggressive drives, while women see him in terms of plasticity and sensitivity to outer pressures. For men, the YM pushes energetically into an unstructured environment. For women, the YM is embedded within a complex, highly-articulated environment—he fits neatly and without strain into an established order that has already molded him to its needs. It is as if male respondents propose that the YM is a bull, while

women respondents say that he cannot be a bull because the world is a china shop.⁷

In general, then, men tend to accent the energy that the YM brings to role performance. Women recognize the energy, but obliquely, through the stress they place upon controlling it.

Social-Class Differences

While examination of the data in Table 2 shows certain differences between all four subsamples of respondents in the way their images of the YM are distributed, the most striking difference relates to working-class women. Of 31 responses from working-class women, only one falls in Category 1, while 13 fall in Category 4. Thus the working-class women seem unable to conceive of the YM as an aggressive achiever, internally-motivated; they stress, instead, the outer demands and influences which bear upon him. For these women, the YM is "bleached-out," affectively remote, with little strength or drive in either the intra-familial or the extrafamilial worlds; he is related to others in terms of morality and rationality rather than through patterns of impulsivity or intimacy.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

The Young Woman, by contrast with the YM, is not only comfortably accounted for within the setting of the family, she seems to live only within that setting. Respondents perceive no roles for her other than familial roles.

She is seldom a sharply-etched figure. "Nice" or "pleasant" are words frequently used to describe her, and she is

⁷Female sexual anxieties may be involved here—the need to limit and confine the intrusive energies of the male, and to make of him a "nice" person.

most often seen as "waiting" for a decision to be made by the others. Few respondents attribute to her great vitality or autonomy or determination (she stands in contrast to the OW in these respects). At the same time, the YW occupies a central role in the family. While she is not a vigorous figure who initiates or resolves family issues, she is the figure about whom issues are initiated and resolved. Typical stories are those in which the YM wants to marry her and she waits for her parents' (especially her mother's) decision; or she is already married and about to have a child and the issue is now what her parents will think of the news; or the older couple is giving advice to the younger and she is the one who sees both sides of the issue.

It is through the YW that the YM is usually related to the older figures; the YW who provides the tie between younger and older generations.

The Young Man, it will be recalled, is seen as bridging the familial and the commercial worlds; in somewhat similar fashion the Young Woman bridges two systems of affiliation: affiliation to opposite-sex peer, and affiliation to parents. Respondents seem preoccupied with the issue of the YW's affiliation. To whom does she or should she belong? How should she divide herself between the roles of woman and child? What is the nature of her affiliative bonds—are they spontaneous and affective, or formal and deferent?

As regards respondents' personalities, we have suggested that the YM symbolizes the problems posed by intrusive masculine energies. The YW seems to symbolize the problems related to tenderness, intimacy, and sexuality—how much are these to be cathected to heterosexual objects and how much to pregenital objects? For

older respondents, a further problem is, given that the YW represents a libidinal fount, how much love can they expect to receive? Or what substitutes for this love can they legitimately claim?

Categories of Role Descriptions

The roles descriptions of the Young Woman can be subsumed under six broad categories, each representing a different pattern of the YW's affiliation with the other figures in the picture.

1. *Freedom from parents.* Here the YW is strongly affiliated with the YM (her fiancé or husband). She strives successfully against the OW for the right to take on adult sex roles (wife, homemaker, mother); or, already filling such roles, she fights off the encroachments of the OW (usually defined as her mother-in-law).

2. *Affiliated to parents.* In this category the YW is seen as related affectively only to the parents. Childlike, she has strong and spontaneous needs for affiliation only with them. Even in those stories in which the YM is seen as her husband, her relationship with him is described in formal terms only, and her primary ties remain to the parents.

3. *Complementary affiliations.* Here the YW is affectively related to both the YM and the parents. She has her feet in both camps—she is a good wife and mother, she loves her husband, she loves her parents, and there is no incompatibility among these loyalties. Her affiliations are complementary and nonconflicting.

4. *Conflicted.* In these stories, the YW has strong needs for autonomy, away from the parents and toward the YM; and at the same time, strong needs for deference and succorance towards the parents. She is seen in what might be called an adolescent role, as one who pulls forcibly away from the parents toward mature roles and heterosexual affiliation, while at the same time remaining dependent upon them. She is torn between childish and mature role choices.

5. *Deference to parents.* Here the YW relates to parents in terms of succorance and deference, but the relationship is formal, rational, and without warmth. She remains affectively remote from parents and her ties with them are based upon "superego" demands rather than upon libidinal demands.

6. *Controlled by parents.* Here the YW appears in much the same terms as in Category 5—deference or succorance toward parents, without affective affiliation—except that here there is an

added element of being controlled by the parents. These stories deal always with the situation in which the YW is considering marriage (thus at least a formal need for heterosexual affiliation away from the family is recognized) and is deferring to her parents' decision. Not bound to her parents by love, the YW nevertheless passively yields to them the disposition of her affairs.

The role descriptions of the YW are distributed as shown in Table 3.

Age Differences

As seen in Table 3, Categories 1 and 2 represent the images of the YW held predominantly by younger respondents (age 40-54), Categories 3 and 4 occur about equally frequently in both age groups, and Categories 5 and 6 are those of predominantly older respondents (aged 55-70).

Younger respondents see the YW in polar ways. She is either pulling assertively away from the family, intent on becoming a woman and a mother in her own right, or she is freely and spontaneously relating to the parents alone, without cathexis to the YM and without desires for mature womanly achievement. Younger respondents, as a group, are undecided about the nature of the YW's affiliation, and the claims that parents can make upon it. There is tension over the issue of allegiance to an extrafamilial (in this case, the YM) or to an intrafamilial identity.

On another level of interpretation, that pertaining to the personalities of respondents themselves, we may infer some conflict in younger respondents between independent and dependent modes of cathexis; between sexually mature and immature tendencies.

For older respondents, the role descriptions have in common the YW's lack of affective ties with parents, but her deference towards parental authority.

Perhaps the contrast between Categories 1 and 6 reveals most sharply the nature of the age shift in perceptions of the YW. Category 1 presents the YW as strongly oriented toward heterosexual affiliation and as desirous of becoming a woman in her own right. Parental controls, if they exist, are to be flouted rather than conformed to. Needs for peer affiliation and mature status are primary. Category 6, on the other hand, shows the YW as being aware of these needs, but now it is parental controls which have primacy. Rather than acting on the basis of her own motivations and her own drive toward maturity, she acts on the basis of parental needs and her own introjected controls.

Older respondents seem to have abandoned the expectation that the YW will have any strong feelings for parents. They stress the submissive rather than the libidinal qualities in the parent-child relationship (to the extent that the YW is affiliative toward the older generation, the affiliation is charged with succorance needs rather than with spontaneous warmth). Instead of love, parents will have respect. To older respondents as a group, the figure of the YW no longer presents the conflict seen by younger respondents—the conflict between heterosexual impulses that have a centrifugal effect upon the primary group and childish impulses that have a centripetal effect. Now the YW's centrifugal tendencies are

TABLE 3
ROLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE YOUNG WOMAN

Category:		Age 40-54		Age 55-70	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Freedom from parents	Middle-class	5	7	1	3
	Working-class	6	2	1	1
	Total	20*		6	
2. Affiliated to parents	Middle-class	4	3	0	1
	Working-class	3	3	1	2
	Total	13		4	
3. Complementary affiliations	Middle-class	0	3	4	1
	Working-class	4	3	2	2
	Total	10		9	
4. Conflicted	Middle-class	5	5	5	2
	Working-class	5	2	4	3
	Total	17		14	
5. Deference to parents	Middle-class	1	1	3	1
	Working-class	2	1	3	3
	Total	5		10	
6. Controlled by parents	Middle-class	1	3	1	5
	Working-class	1	1	4	5
	Total	6		15	

* The chi-square test was applied to these category totals. The probability that the distribution occurred by chance is between .005 and .001.

seen as controlled, and the YW herself is seen as taking responsibility for maintaining some vestige of the parent-child relationship.

Turning again to questions of personality change with age, it has been suggested that the YW symbolizes the issues of intimacy and sexuality. With increased age of respondent, there is increased emphasis upon the YW's dependence on parents for nurturance and control. For 60-year-olds, then, the conflict between heterosexual and pregenital modes of cathexis appears to have been resolved in favor of the latter. Heterosexual concerns are no longer seen as compelling, and are not viewed as legitimate reasons for breaking away from the home. Perhaps a further implication is that, for the older respondent, the world seems to be shrinking toward the confines of the controlling and nurturing family. Older respondents in fantasy no longer strain away from the family; instead, they seem to identify with the controls that keep one within it.

The older respondents' perceptions of the Young Man are also relevant here. The YM is seen as relating to the outer world as a conformist, as one who adapts himself to the demands of the extra-familial environment. Similarly, the Young Woman relates as a conformist to the parents, as one who lives in a world of strictures rather than in a world of self-initiated action. (This finding, that with increasing age of respondent there is increasing conformity ascribed to the young, is statistically reliable beyond the .001 level.) The similarity in these views suggests that, to the 60-year-old, the individual is no longer a forceful manipulator of the object world, but is instead a rather passive object manipulated by the environment. The individual can de-

termine only partly the outcomes of such manipulations, and then only by adopting attitudes of accommodation and conformity.

Sex differences

Men and women are in general agreement in their perceptions of the YW. Table 3 shows that men more often than women see the YW as conflicted over the question of where her primary affiliations lie (Category 4), and that women more often than men see the YW as being controlled by parents (Category 6); but the overall similarities between the sexes are perhaps more striking than the differences.

At the same time there are certain sex differences in perception of the YW that are not shown in Table 3. Younger men sometimes describe the YW as already established beyond the family confines; as a wife and mother in her own right, and as being affectively remote from parents (these stories form a subcategory of Category 1). This view of the YW never occurs among women respondents. Instead, throughout these data, women always demand that the YW's movement away from the family be accompanied by some compensatory gesture of affiliation or deference toward parents. Women cannot be neutral or unconcerned either about the YW's identifications nor about the more general issue of setting children free. (Something of the same tendency occurs around the figure of the Young Man, although to lesser extent.) Men are somewhat more willing to admit that the YW can be equally a wife and daughter; women tend to say that she is first a daughter and second a wife.

The greater concern among women over controlling the YW (especially true of older women) is additional evidence

for the thesis that women are more involved emotionally with the YW than are men and, by implication, that women are more concerned with the issues of intimacy and sexuality than are men.⁸

Social-Class Differences

Examination of Table 3 shows great similarity between middle- and working-class respondents in their perceptions of the YW. In only one segment of the data is there a significant difference: middle-class women, as compared with working-class, more frequently see the YW in terms of Category 1—as vigorous, autonomous, sometimes rebellious, and successful in breaking her ties to parents.

It will be recalled that these women also ascribe energy and drive to the Young Man more frequently than did working-class women. Thus, while equally concerned with the issue of controlling the young, middle-class mothers, by ascribing greater vitality to both the YM and YW are implying that the relationship between younger and older generations is a complex problem; and that young people, by being something of a match for parents, are not easily controlled.

THE OLDER MAN

The Older Man is sometimes an authoritative, but more often a submissive figure in the family. Those respondents who see him as dominant tend also to propose some hesitations in the exercise of that role. He may act to limit the young people in some way, but if so, he puts restrictions not on their freedom of action but on their succorant demands

toward him. If he is approached for advice, he may tell children in effect to "grow up" or "use your own judgment." In short, the OM is most authoritative when he is pointing out to the others that he is not an authority.

In some instances, the OM is seen as standing between an autonomy-seeking YM and an overnurturant OW who would spoil the YM if the OM did not intervene. This issue of the YM's untrammelled achievement is one of the few about which the OM can act assertively. In most cases, however, he is overwhelmed by the complexity of an emotional situation, withdraws, and turns it over to the OW. At other times, he is isolated altogether.

On the other hand, somewhat like the YM, the OM is not altogether circumscribed within the family setting. It is recognized that he has preoccupations in other areas. While he is seldom described as achieving or successful in the extra-familial world (his is a custodial rather than an achieving role), still the implication is clear that to gauge his impact in the family setting is not to gauge his full worth as a person.

In comparison with the Older Woman, the OM has a certain blandness of affective life. He tends generally to be passive and resigned to whatever happens. The affect that he most consistently expresses is that of uncritical affiliation: "He likes them all and wants to do the right thing for everybody." The OM has, in general, less impulse life than the OW and is less often portrayed as being in conflict situations.

The essence of the OM's role is perhaps this: he can wrestle with the interpersonal environment when such activity has the purpose of gratifying others. If he stands opposed to others, then he

⁸ There is much more YW-OW conflict described in the stories than YM-OM conflict; and while there are few instances of YM-OM conflict over the YW, there are many instances of YM-OW conflict over the YW.

must alter himself to conform to their needs, or he must withdraw to a world of inner contemplation where the actions of others do not impinge upon him.

The figure of the OM seems to symbolize for respondents the ego qualities of the personality: the rational rather than the impulsive approach to problems, concern over the needs of others, reconciliation between opposing interests, cerebral competence.

Categories of Role Descriptions

The descriptions of the OM fall into six major categories that can be ordered along a continuum from dominance to submission.

1. *Altruistic authority.* In this category the OM is seen in a position of authority in the family and he uses his authority to benefit the young people or the family as a whole. He is the benevolent monarch, the nurturant wise man, whose actions are altruistically motivated and lead only to benevolent outcomes. He operates effortlessly and easily in this role.

2. *Assertive, but guilty.* These descriptions are those in which the OM attempts to further his own ends, but is restrained by inner reluctances, doubts, or guilt. He occupies a position of strength and asserts himself within the family; and while he is not opposed by others, he nevertheless cannot easily and singlemindedly press for his announced goals. There is always some quality of inner doubt about the justice of his claims. He is conflicted, unsure, the insecure autocrat. "He thinks it's about time those kids left home and earned their own living—he hates to tell them, though."

3. *Formal authority.* Here the father is the authority, but by default. His authority is challenged as the story progresses; or other individuals take action to decide outcomes while he acts only to approve those outcomes. He is described here not so much in terms of service to others (as in Category 1), but in terms of pliability to the wishes of others. He merely approves decisions which have already been thrashed out among more active figures.

4. *Surrendered authority.* It is indicated here that the OM could be the authority if he desired—he possesses the requisite qualities—but he refuses and/or abandons the role. In some instances, he is initially described as dominant, but as the story unfolds he is relegated to a

more submissive position. In other instances, he is ascribed the qualities associated with leadership, but these qualities are split away from action—they have no impact on the events of the story, they do not impinge on outcomes, they find no overt behavioral expression. He is inwardly "tough,"—but overtly passive; or he has "executive qualities,"—but leaves the decision up to his wife. In no instance is there an intrusion of the OM as a dominant force on the family scene.

5. *Passive, affiliative.* Here the OM is described in terms of what might be called maternal qualities. He is unflaggingly and uncritically affiliative toward the others. He "loves everybody." He accepts, resignedly, outcomes which he may not approve. He is dominated by his wife, but seems to feel no discomfort or resentment in the situation. In stories where the OW is opposing some action proposed by the young people, such as marriage, the OM's attitude is one of affiliating with both sides—of saying affectionately to the OW, "Why fight the inevitable?"

6. *Passive, cerebral.* Grouped here are those descriptions which present the OM as passive and withdrawn. He lacks any announced affiliative attachments to others. The issue of authority does not even arise. His wife rules the family, and he remains remote, both in terms of action and affect, from the family drama. As this drama swirls about him, he "thinks." (The content of his thought, or its relevance to the situation, is rarely specified.) The OM controls events from behind the forehead, as it were, and takes a certain satisfaction in the freedom this provides him. As one male respondent put it, "He's made up his mind about the thing. He's waiting for the old woman to tell them what to do."

Age Differences

As shown in Table 4, there is a consistent shift, with increasing age of respondent, from seeing the OM in situations of power in the family toward seeing him as passive and submissive. (This age shift is statistically significant beyond the .005 level.)

The stimulus figure of the OM confronts the majority of younger respondents with the issue of familial authority. (If category 4 is included, then approximately 75% of all younger respondents see the OM either as an authority figure

TABLE 4
ROLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE OLDER MAN

Category:		Age 40-54		Age 55-70	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Altruistic authority	Middle-class	5	9	2	1
	Working-class	3	3	1	3
	Total	20*		7	
2. Assertive, but guilty	Middle-class	2	0	2	2
	Working-class	6	1	1	1
	Total	9		6	
3. Formal authority	Middle-class	5	5	0	0
	Working-class	2	3	1	0
	Total	15		1	
4. Surrendered authority	Middle-class	2	3	4	3
	Working-class	6	1	3	2
	Total	12		12	
5. Passive, affiliative	Middle-class	0	4	2	6
	Working-class	3	4	3	8
	Total	11		19	
6. Passive, cerebral	Middle-class	4	1	4	1
	Working-class	1	0	6	2
	Total	6		13	

* The chi-square test was applied to these category totals. The probability that the distribution occurred by chance is less than .001.

or as one who possesses the potential for authority.)

Each of the first four categories in Table 4 represents a different resolution of the issue of male dominance. The first two represent active resolutions. If the issue is met head on—if, that is, the OM defines self-gratifying goals and uses his position of authority to achieve them (Category 2)—then ambivalence and guilt are the necessary results. If, on the other hand, the OM uses his authority nurturantly for the benefit of others, he can act easily and comfortably in his position (Category 1). The more passive solutions involve either the OM's sanctioning of the wishes of others and attempting no intervention in the family scene (Cate-

gory 3), or the more outright abandonment of the authoritative status altogether (Category 4).

For our 40-54 group, the issue being dealt with around the role of the OM is not only that of male dominance, however, but also that of male aggression within the family. (The latter was also one of the primary issues in the role descriptions of the YM.) The problem seems to be how the OM can be an authority without being arbitrarily, and perhaps harmfully, self-assertive. How can the cultural demand—that the father is head of the family—be met without exposing the family to male aggression? As already suggested, the solution seems to involve the stressing of the moral func-

tion of authority: the OM must be either an active force for good; or, by "letting things happen," he passively cooperates with the others in arriving at positive outcomes.

For older respondents, the OM no longer presents the issue of masculine authority. The stories are now those in which the OM has no impact upon family events, and he presents only one or another image of passivity. (Of all respondents aged 55-70, 55% are found in the last two categories. If Category 4 is included—the OM abandoning or surrendering authority—then 80% of all older respondents see the OM among the categories of submission and denial of authority.)

The age shift in the image of the OM from dominance to submission is elaborated in several ways. The forty-year-old respondent sees the OM as being in doubt about his own assertive tendencies; the 60-year-old sees him as being the passive object of others' assertion. In the 40's, the OM is seen as attempting to control events. In the 60's, he only attempts to control and order the cognitive environment, the symbolic traces of objects and events. In the 40's, it is proposed that the OM is aware of the pressures from an impulsive and wilful woman, but that he can allow the OW full expression and still wisely control the course of events. In the 60's, it is proposed that impulse, in the form of the OW, is left in charge of the field, that the OM's wisdom can only control events behind the forehead. The OM has moved from a stance of intrafamilial autonomy to "intracranial" autonomy.

As regards the implications for personality differences in respondents, it has been said that the figure of the OM symbolizes ego qualities of the personality.

With increased age of respondent, the ego, as personified by the OM, seems to contract. On the one hand, it is no longer in contact with impulse life, controlling and channeling it (the OM no longer controls the OW's impulsivity). On the other hand, the ego is no longer in a position of mastery relative to the outer world (the OM is not successful in the extrafamilial world). Ego functions are turned inward, as it were, and while rational thought processes are still important in the personality, thought is no longer relevant to action.

Age-Sex Differences

While age differences in the perception of the OM along the dominance-submission axis are consistent, there are, at the same time, important differences between the sexes.

Women. Among younger respondents, it is primarily the women who see the OM in the altruistic, nurturant role (Category 1), while it is the men who tend to see him in the role of insecure autocrat (Category 2).

Women see the OM as a kind of benign ego figure who exercises his authority benevolently. He allows the children to go off and get married, for instance, and he lets the OW rave about their leaving, knowing all the time that this is what reality is: children grow up, and the OW's feelings about it, no matter how stridently expressed, cannot really change anything nor hurt anyone. In allowing the OW to rant, the OM nevertheless deftly controls her, and he prevents her feelings from dominating the situation. (It is as if the women respondents who tell these stories are saying of themselves that they rely on their husbands to let them be emotional and expressive; that so long as their husbands

are present to control events they, the women, cannot hurt themselves or others.)

Among the older respondents, it is predominantly the women who put stress on the OM's affective qualities, especially his "sweetness" (Category 5). There is a nurturant, almost maternal quality in the OM's passivity.

The OM appears to both younger and older women, then, as one who is identified with the needs of younger individuals. The difference between younger and older women respondents lies in the fact that, for the former, the OM is seen as enforcing his nurturant views on events, guaranteeing benevolent outcomes to the young. For the latter, the OM no longer acts effectively from his nurturant posture. The OM's role does not now have the same quality as before of a barrier interposing between an incensed OW and the vulnerable young. The OW is let loose in the situation, and the OM is no longer capable of checking her. (At the same time, it is suggested that really the young are no longer vulnerable and that they somehow operate beyond the OW's reach.)

The age shift for women occurs, then, in terms of the OM's decreasing effectiveness in implementing his nurturant attitudes and in making outcomes conform to them.

With regard to personalities of respondents, women, in responding to the figure of the OM, seem to be preoccupied with concepts of altruism, nurturance, and generativity. In early middle age (40-54), they propose that these qualities are the important ones in the disposition of affairs. Even though, in the stories told by younger women, the OW may be at odds with the OM, it is the OM who wins out. As they age, women still ac-

knowledge the relevance of nurturance and generativity, and still lodge these qualities in the figure of the OM, but they now propose that the more self-assertive, domineering OW will carry the day. Thus they imply that the soft, warm, maternal qualities are not so important on the family scene—or in their own affective repertoire—as when they were younger. Perhaps, as children become mature and less emotionally vulnerable, women can allow themselves to be more tolerant of their own needs for self-assertion and domination. Perhaps they are less frightened of the aggressive side of their personalities once they can reassure themselves that it will no longer interfere with the maternal function, will no longer have destructive consequences for the young.

Men. For male respondents, the age shift occurs along different continua than for women. Though for men, too, the OM's authority decreases with increasing age of respondent, the issues are those of competence and assertiveness. The 40-year-old male sees the OM as struggling with problems relating to assertion, guilt, nurturance, and affiliativeness—conflicts he attempts to solve in terms of complex role patterns that integrate the various elements. The 60-year-old male tends to see the OM as one who has simplified these problems. The OM has reached a solution through relinquishing the assertive role elements, and has abandoned any attempts at active manipulation of the environment. Rather than attempting to alter the environment, he adjusts to it. Rather than dealing with people and events, he organizes only the conceptual traces of the environment as they intrude upon his inner world of thought.

For older men, the figure of the OM

is elaborated largely in terms of his continuing cerebral competence (Category 6). Rather than actively intervening in the family and taking the responsibility such intervention entails, the OM restricts himself to the control of symbols. Ordering the inner cognitive world has replaced the more risk-laden transactions with the environment. For example, a man of 64 says of the OM: "He's easy-going. Doesn't care whether school keeps. He doesn't take care of his clothes." The theme of the story is illness, and the OM relative to this crisis is described further: "I don't know—but from his appearance he looks like a man who would like to light his pipe and get off somewhere and think about it." Here threat is met by flight and isolation; the OM's thought processes are the last remnant of competence, the surviving manipulative mode. The OM in this story has almost ceased dealing with a social environment. His only meaningful affiliation is to a nonhuman pacifier, a pipe. This, in rather extreme form, is the modal image of the OM given us by older men.

In relating these role descriptions with the personalities of respondents, the implication is that men, as they spell out the role of the OM, are concerned with the problems of male assertiveness. It will be recalled that somewhat the same issues are dealt with when men verbalize their fantasies around the YM. Men seem to say that, for both the YM and OM, aggression and self-assertion are inappropriate or unacceptable within the family. Young men must control themselves (or be controlled by parents). Older men, to avoid guilt, must act as altruists or conformists, or they must withdraw altogether from active participation in the family.

For both YM and OM, there is an area outside that of family interaction in which one can be competent—for the YM, the world of industry and work; for the OM, the world of thought.

With increasing age, men seem also to see a shifting pattern of interaction between YM and OM in the family scene. For the 40-year-old, a YM will direct his energies outward and the OM will be the benevolent authority in the family. For the 60-year-old, a YM has become a more assertive force within the family (although his assertiveness is still not harmful) and an OM has withdrawn from family interaction altogether. It is of special interest that the energies of the YM and OM do not clash; the two rarely strive for dominance in the same area at the same time.

Social-Class Differences

Table 4 shows great consistency between middle-class and working-class respondents of both sexes in the distribution of responses. It appears that social class is not a meaningful variable and that the same age and sex differences in perceptions of the OM occur in both social classes.

THE OLDER WOMAN

The Older Woman, by comparison to the other figures in the picture, is the key figure in the family. The family is her arena, and within it she emerges in full scope and complexity. In stories where the solidarity of the family is stressed, the OW is the one around whom the family is centered. In stories of conflict, she is always the key protagonist. There are, for instance, a number of stories that might be labeled "Oedipal" in theme—stories in which the YW is being claimed by the YM, or

vice-versa, and where there is conflict between the young and the old. In these stories, it is always the OW, but not the OM, who is seen as the protagonist in the struggle.

For the OW, the major issue is around retentiveness of the young—what is to be the extent and the nature of the tie between herself and her children. This issue always has strong emotional components for her.

In contrast to the Young Woman, the OW is seen as standing on her own feet, a person in her own right. The psychological distance between her and the Older Man is much greater than that between the two young figures. Whereas the YW and YM are seen in a close, collaborative relationship, the OW and OM stand separate and apart. They are often described in polar terms—if one is dominant, the other is submissive; if one is nurturant, the other is narcissistic.

Compared with the other figures, the OW is the one to whom the greatest depth and variety of feelings are assigned. In particular contrast to the YW, the OW is seldom bland and seldom neutral; she has strong feelings, both positive and negative. More often than not she is seen as acting on the basis of impulse and inner need; as the most inner-directed of the figures. Although her desires may be limited by the actions of others, or she may surrender to superior forces, she never doubts the rightness of her position.

The OW is not always seen as comfortable in her role, and she is the only figure who is as often described by respondents in negative as in positive terms.

Categories of Role Descriptions

Descriptions of the Older Woman were grouped into six major categories. While

the categories are ordered in Table 5 along the general continuum from submission to dominance, there are in reality two major themes which, in one or another combination, form the basis for the differentiation. The first is the theme of control over others—whether the OW is seen as submissive and controlled (Categories 1, 2, 3) or as dominant and the controller (Categories 4, 5, 6). The second theme is that of the nature of impulsivity—whether the OW is viewed as benign and nurturant (Categories 1, 4, 5) or self-assertive and aggressive (Categories 2, 3, 6).

1. *Submissive, nurturant.* Here the OW is viewed as passive, relative to the determination of outcomes. She is affiliative, nurturant, benevolent, but never self-assertive. She takes a position of deference to a wise, authoritative Older Man. She is the fluttery, "little woman" type and never intrudes on the masculine prerogatives of thought and decision. She is dependent on her husband for guidance and for control. To the extent that she takes action at all, the action is nurturant, promoting the best interests of others, especially the young.

2. *Controlled by OM.* Here the OW is seen as aggressive and impulsive, but she is controlled by the OM. Although she is something of a "battle-ax," she is more the family nuisance than the family menace. Her rages do not intimidate, they merely annoy. The wise and tolerant husband allows her free expression of her feelings, but deftly controls her. He determines outcomes and guarantees nurturant solutions to the autonomy-seeking young, often in the face of the OW's active opposition.

3. *Limited by children.* Here, as in the preceding category, an aggressive, domineering-OW tries to extend her control over a resistant environment. While she now dominates her husband, she is successfully opposed and limited by the YW and/or the YM. The OM cannot provide a buffer between the intrusive OW and the young, but the young take up the cudgels for themselves and win out against the OW.

4. *The good mother.* Here the issue of dominance-submission is not specifically introduced, though the OW is implicitly given the decisive role in the disposition of affairs. The OW is the good, nurturant mother who guides and supports her gratified husband and children. She is mild, benign, maternal. Though she has

the most effective role in the family, there is no tension between her and the others. The view is rather of harmonious interaction, where it is only right and "natural" that the mother holds the most important place in the family.

5. *The matriarch.* In this category the OW is seen as a forceful and aggressive authority. While, however, she has complete sway over the others, this leads only to benign results. The family, rather than opposing her, bask contentedly in their dependent and submissive positions. Everyone benefits from her rule.

6. *Hostile self-assertion.* Here the OW is a stereotyped figure, one who exercises a harsh, arbitrary, and unopposed control. Her dominance is not tempered by any redeeming strain of affiliation or nurturance, nor does she have any concern for others. The OW is either pictured as the embodiment of amoral Id—all impulse and wrath; or the punitive Superego who harshly judges others and rigidly defines the moral code—a Superego armed, as it were, with the energies of the Id.

Age Differences

As shown in Table 5, role definitions of the Older Woman, like those of the other three figures, vary consistently with age of respondent. Whereas the age shift in the perception of the Older Man's role is in the direction of increasing submissiveness, the OW moves from a subordinate to an authoritative family role. (The age shift is statistically stable at the .001 level.)

In the first three categories, primarily those of younger respondents, the OW is seen either as "socialized"—adapting her behavior and attitudes to the needs of others (Category 1); or as aggressive and impulsive, but being held in check by

TABLE 5
ROLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE OLDER WOMAN

Category:		Age 40-54		Age 55-70	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Submissive, nurturant	Middle-class	10	6	1	3
	Working-class	4	4	2	3
	Total	24*		9	
2. Controlled by OM	Middle-class	1	9	1	0
	Working-class	5	5	1	2
	Total	20		4	
3. Limited by children	Middle-class	2	3	1	1
	Working-class	3	2	2	4
	Total	10		8	
4. The good mother	Middle-class	2	0	7	2
	Working-class	7	0	3	2
	Total	9		14	
5. The matriarch	Middle-class	1	3	0	3
	Working-class	1	0	1	1
	Total	5		5	
6. Hostile self-assertion	Middle-class	2	1	4	3
	Working-class	1	1	5	4
	Total	5		16	

* The chi-square test was applied to these category totals. The probability that the distribution occurred by chance is less than .001.

effective outer restraints (Categories 2, 3). In either case, her impact upon the situation is relatively unimportant. Older respondents hold that, whether "socialized" and nurturant (Categories 4, 5) or punitive and narcissistic (Category 6), the OW is the dominant figure, responsible for the outcome of family affairs.

Younger respondents, then, view the OW as sensitive to, or checked by, outer demands and pressures. Older respondents propose that the OW has come to be the embodiment of controls, strictures, limits. She has taken over the moral and directive qualities which, for younger respondents, were seen as operating outside herself.

In general, with increasing age of respondent, the OW emerges more and more as the most feelingful, demanding, and aggressive figure, as the other figures tend toward greater passivity, colorlessness, and conformity. In stories told by older respondents, the point at which the OW is described tends frequently to signal the break-through of impulsivity, as if the OW represents unchecked impulse in a scene otherwise populated by more constricted, conforming or affiliative figures.⁹

It has already been implied that, as regards respondents themselves, the Older Woman symbolizes the impulsive, self-centered qualities of the personality (in contrast to the OM who symbolizes ego qualities of the personality). The age shift in perception of the OW implies, therefore, increasing pressures from the impulse life in the face of decreasing ego controls.

⁹ Perhaps the projection of impulsive elements of personality upon the figure of the OW is partially stimulated by her "facelessness" in the picture. If impulsivity is regarded by respondents as "ego-alien," it might well be ascribed to that figure in the picture which provides fewest cues regarding social interaction.

Age-Sex Differences

Although men and women generally agree on the broad outlines of the shift from submission to dominance in the OW's role, the shift for the two sex groups takes place along different axes and in terms of different role attributes.

Men. While many men view the OW as having strong aggressive, intrusive needs, still a significantly greater number see her—whether dominant or not—as benign and maternal. (Sixty per cent of all males place the OW in Categories 1, 4, or 5.) The most frequent image of the OW among younger men is that of the good little woman leaning on a strong and wise husband (Category 1), or the good mother whose influence, though decisive, is only benevolent and constructive (Category 4). For older men, the most frequent image is again that of the good mother (Category 4) around whom there is no tension but only gratification.

For many of the men, then, the OW remains motherly, benign, nurturant, but the implication is that these maternal, affiliative qualities come to take on greater significance in the resolution of family issues. The OW remains essentially the same person, but her impact on the family increases. She is no longer submissive or controlled by others; instead, the issue of authority disappears altogether as the OW is allowed to "come into her own."

Perhaps the implication, as regards the personalities of most older men, is that they are more receptive to their own affiliative, nurturant, and sensual promptings than are younger men. In projecting these qualities upon the figure of the OW, and then giving the OW a central role in the determination of outcomes, these older men seem to be relatively acceptant of "womanly" qualities

in themselves, and to feel little need to deny or limit these qualities.

There are, on the other hand, a sizable number of older men who see the OW as a hostile and punitive autocrat (Category 6). In these stories, the OM withdraws from the family scene (removing himself, as it were, from the fray) but creates for himself an arena in which he is not only invulnerable but still competent, the arena of the intellect.

Perhaps this second group of older men, in contrast to the majority, cannot accept the new passivity in their personalities and so regress to archaic defenses against it. They project upon the Older Woman the responsibility for their passivity. By proposing that she is a tyrant, they justify their own submission as something imposed upon them, not something inherent in their own personalities.

This second group of older men are perhaps saying, also, that hostile and aggressive impulses in the personality (qualities projected upon the OW) can no longer, as with younger men, be countered with more benevolent and altruistic impulses. (It is only in the younger men's fantasies that the maternal OM limits and controls the impulsive OW.) Since impulse can now be only destructive and hostile, it should be split away altogether and the attempt should be to lead a life of quiet reason.

Women. While many women recognize the OW as a nurturant figure, the majority see her in terms of assertive, intrusive qualities. (55% of all female responses place the OW in Categories 2, 3, or 6.) Younger women tend to see the OW's needs for dominance and aggressive self-assertion as being effectively restrained—limits are set on her by her husband or by her children. (It should be noted that of 34 younger women re-

spondents, not one sees the OW in Category 4, as merely the "good mother" untroubled by problems of narcissistic needs.) For older women, the OW is essentially still a self-assertive figure, but now the limits have become ineffectual and less charged with moral authority. Where the OW was once blocked by agents who had "right" on their side—an OM who had greater wisdom and nurturance than she, or young people whose claims for autonomy were valid—the OW now becomes self-righteously assertive. This self-assertion may go in either direction—the good mother whose benevolent sway over family affairs is unchallenged, or the narcissistic autocrat—but in either case, it is the OW's domineering needs that win out.

Moving again to the area of personality: as has already been pointed out in reference to perceptions of the Older Man, women, as they age, seem to become more responsive toward, and less guilty about, their own aggressive, ego-centric impulses. Aggression and self-assertion are perhaps viewed as inimical to the central functions of motherhood, and can only be tolerated and acted out when the young are sufficiently independent to withstand or ignore the mother's intrusiveness. Hence it is only older women, whose children are presumably grown, who fantasy the OW's monolithic and unchecked dominance. The benign, maternal qualities tend meanwhile to become more ego-alien and are projected onto the OM, who, while seen as ineffectual, is nevertheless also regarded by women as the more lovable figure of the two.

It has been said that female respondents lay greater stress than male respondents on the OW's aggressive needs for controlling others and on the forces which oppose these needs. These findings

suggest a sex difference in regard to the more general issue of social controls. It appears that men, seeing the OW exercising a benign control over a complaisant and gratified family, are proposing generally that authority is not coercive, and that self-restriction and compliance are natural and unforced. Control is essentially internalized and does not require punitive external measures for its maintenance. Authority is good, acceptable, and unquestioned. This is in contrast to the female view. Women, viewing the domineering OW as essentially in conflict with her environment—forcibly controlling it, or being checked by it—suggest that for them control, submissiveness, and conformity are more difficult issues.

Social-Class Differences

Examination of Table 5 shows a remarkable consistency between middle-class and working-class groups in their views of the OW. As was the case with the figure of the Older Man, it is not social class, but age and sex of respondent that produce the variation in the data.

FANTASY DATA IN RELATION TO SEX-ROLE BEHAVIOR

Since these findings have been derived from projective data, what are their implications as regards role behavior?

The individual, in filling real life roles, resolves tensions between personal needs and social expectations. The task of the ego is to organize the various affective components of the personality into a personally expressive, though socially acceptable, pattern of behavior. When presented with the picture, however, a different demand is made of the respondent. He is asked, not to act in the real family setting, but to breathe vitality into a

representation of family life. The task of the ego is not one of integrating various aspects of the self into a coherent pattern of behavior, but the opposite: in effect, to distribute various components of the self among the various figures in the picture.

This fractionating of the components of personality makes the Thematic Apperception technique a valuable clinical instrument; but it imposes qualifications on its use in the study of social roles. In the latter case, the respondent describes a living complexity (the role of YM or OW) in terms of only one or a few facets of the self. The projected aspect of the self, temporarily winnowed out of the total personality structure, tends to be expressed in exaggerated form. The result is a certain stereotypy and a certain overemphasis in the role descriptions. The task for the role analyst is thus made correspondingly difficult. The role patterns he wishes to describe may have been distorted into nonviable extremes as they have become the foci for conflicting elements in the respondents' personalities. Rather than objective role descriptions, his data are the affective connotations of role behavior, those which people limit and modify in real life.

The findings presented here must be interpreted with caution, then, in applying them to actual role behavior. It should be kept in mind that if the respondent speaks of the Older Man as weak and passive, and the Older Woman as dominant and manipulative, he is not only describing two polar forms of behavior but also two aspects of himself, and that both such aspects will find some (though not equal) expression in his own behavior. If the respondent is an older man, he cannot be described merely on the basis of his description of the Older

Man, as passive and weak; for the respondent is a person who also has needs for strength and dominance (needs which may find release in the very behavior which otherwise implies passivity, such as hypochondria or "saintliness"). It is the nature of the task—responding to the picture—which allows him to describe the Older Man in more unitary ways than are actually true of himself.

These considerations apply equally with regard to collective role images that emerge from groups of respondents. For example, many older respondents seem to agree that older men are passive, affectless, and isolated from the ongoing stream of intrafamilial events. They are described as "smoking their pipes" and "thinking." It cannot be assumed, however, that the only role of older men in the family is to stand in the corner, thinking and smoking. (This is what is meant by a nonviable extreme.) People who live in the family setting, young or old, do interact with others and do impinge on the environments of other family members. What can be justifiably assumed from this image is not that older men never interact or relate, but that the very activities through which they express the outward forms of intimacy also tend to highlight their desire for passivity and isolated contemplation. The image does not report the daily reality of the older man's role; rather, it is a sharply drawn, condensed expression of the affective mode which underlies his activities. The sharpness of the image is derived from the condensed expression of what is seen as being central to the figure of the Older Man, and from the affective components of the respondents' personalities identified with this central tendency.

What we have in these data, then, is

centrality rather than experienced complexity of role behavior.

To take another example: in many stories, especially in those told by men, the description of the Older Woman provides a point at which unchecked impulse breaks into a scene otherwise peopled by more restrained or affiliative figures. She is a figure of primal omnipotence and wrath. "A devil. Very strict. Must run everything and everybody." In one sense the description functions to bring the aggressive impulse life of the respondent into the story.¹⁰ What emerges is not an unbiased account of the Older Woman, but a picture of the Older Woman as it is filled out by aggressive energy that has its locus within the respondent himself. (It is the respondent's own denied rage, projected onto the figure of the Older Woman, that he calls a "devil.") This account also represents a nonviable extreme. Women who live in a social environment cannot act purely from unmediated primitive impulse. They would soon be hospitalized, institutionalized, or dead. What we are being told in such accounts is that older women's behavior in the family expresses, for those respondents preoccupied with such issues, a central quality of free aggression.

Bearing such considerations in mind, these findings can nevertheless be related to actual role behavior. This relationship is posited on the grounds that the affective complexes energizing the perception of the stimulus figures are indeed cued

¹⁰ Just as in real life his wife may function so as to express elements of the respondent's impulse life that are denied expression in his own behavior. Our findings hint at the possibility that males often handle their aggression in the family by proposing that they are the passive object of attack from a woman, rather than by proposing that aggression stems from within themselves.

by the respondents' expectations of such figures in real life. Granted that various components of the respondent's own personality migrate toward one or another stimulus figure, the impressive fact is the consistency with which the same personality components migrate to the same figure in the picture. For instance, for both men and women respondents, it is almost always the Older Woman, and not the Older Man, to whom impulsivity, aggressivity, and hostile dominance are ascribed. This consistency cannot be explained by chance. The assumption seems warranted that there is something common to the actual role behaviors of older women that elicits this consistency in respondents' fantasies.

To sum up: projective data do not yield descriptions of the total and complex role of the older woman in the family as that role is expressed in everyday, overt behavior (similarly for other figures). What is obtained instead is a central aspect of the role; an aspect that, in one translated form of behavior or another, is being recognized by both men and women. To this extent, these findings reflect at least part of the social reality.

To this extent, furthermore, projective techniques such as the one used in this study can prove to be valuable instruments for understanding the underlying and persistent determinants of role behavior.

SUMMARY

The Thematic Apperception technique was used with a sample of middle-aged adults to study role-images of husbands, wives, sons, and daughters. A specially-designed picture showing a Young Man, a Young Woman, an Older Man, and an Older Woman was presented to 131 men and women aged 40

to 70 of two social-status levels, upper-middle class and working class.

The Young Man was generally seen as a somewhat detached figure in the family setting, oriented primarily toward the extrafamilial world, and related to parents in terms of formal rather than affective ties. The figure symbolized, for both men and women respondents, the primacy of social demands over personal needs for affiliation and self-expression.

The Young Woman was a bland figure, lacking in vitality or autonomy, but the figure around whom family issues were initiated and resolved. She provided the tie between younger and older generations. This figure symbolized issues related to tenderness, intimacy, and sexuality.

The Older Woman was seen as the key figure in the family, and the one who usually had the greatest impact upon the resolution of family issues. She was seen as struggling with problems of retaining and controlling the young, and with controlling her own needs for self-assertion. Compared with the other figures, the OW was ascribed the greatest variety and depth of feelings. The OW symbolized the impulsive, egocentric qualities of personality. Women respondents put stress upon the OW's aggressive qualities. Men saw her either as benign and maternal or as aggressively domineering.

The Older Man, by comparison with the OW, was a more neutral figure whose most consistent feelings were those of uncritical affiliation toward the others. He was seen as acting assertively only when such activity had the purpose of assisting the young in becoming autonomous. Otherwise, the OM was seen as conforming to the wishes of others or as withdrawn altogether from family interac-

tion. For both men and women respondents, the OM symbolized ego qualities of the personality (rationality, attention to the needs of others, competence) in relation both to environmental crises and to the pressures of the impulse life.

The role-images of all four figures varied consistently with age and sex of respondent, but not with social class. Most striking was the fact that with increasing age of respondents, the Older Man and Older Woman reversed roles in regard to authority in the family. For younger men and women (aged 40-54) the Older Man was seen as the authority figure. For older men and women (aged 55-70) the Older Woman was in the dominant role and the Older Man, no matter what other qualities were ascribed

to him, was seen as submissive.

The different images of all four figures presented by men and women at the two age levels are discussed in terms of implications for personality changes in the years from 40 to 70. For example, women, as they age, seem to become more tolerant of their own aggressive, egocentric impulses; while men, as they age, of their own nurturant and affiliative impulses. To take another example, with increasing age in both men and women, ego qualities in the personality seem to become more constricted—more detached from the mastery of affairs, and less in control of impulse life.

Discussed also are the advantages and disadvantages of projective data in understanding role behavior in real life.

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